

PEOPLE & THINGS: By ATTICUS

THE champion jockey of Rumania, Aristides Cucu, has escaped to the West, and I may now reveal the happy tale of his defection.

The main event of the first afternoon at the international Race Meeting at the Hippodromegarten in East Berlin, September 29-30, was the Stalingrad Stakes.

At the briefing of the jockeys before the race it was explained quite clearly that the Russians were to win and there was therefore, horror in the judges' box when Cucu, on a Rumanian horse, clocked in an easy first.

Worse was to come. The orchestra had the Soviet anthem set up on their music-stands and there was an embarrassing delay before scores of the Rumanian National Anthem could be distributed. But saboteurs had been at work and what finally emerged were the rousing strains of the old anthem of the Rumanian Royal family.

“... Then he flies away”

THE trainer of the winning horse was hailed on before the race committee and officially rebuked. Next came Cucu, who stoutly maintained that he had practically pulled his horse's head off and that if there was any political deviation it was the horse's and not his.

But the hubbub continued and, fearing the worst, Cucu, with another famous Rumanian jockey, Jon Pal, waited out the last race and then fled to West Berlin.

How the Communist organisers got through the next day's racing, when Rumania was down to win the Grand and International Race Cup, has, alas, not been revealed to me.

Theatre Landmark

LONDON'S largest theatre, the Coliseum, will be celebrating its fifteenth anniversary on Christmas Eve, and in preparation for the event it has been cleaned and reupholstered. Its splendid jumble of architectural styles has now been painted to resemble mouse of ham—an appropriate envelope, if one can judge from the reviews, for the American musical “Can-Can,” which opened ten days ago.

I had always hoped that secrets were contained in the spectacular

roof-top glass ball which is one of London's landmarks, but in fact it contains nothing but rows of electric lights which flash on and off alternately so that it appears to revolve.

When the theatre was first built for Sir Oswald Stoll in 1904, the ball did revolve, but the Metropolitan Police told the management to keep it still because its gyrations were causing horses to shy in the streets below.



Grock—Last Week

NEXT Sunday in Hamburg, Grock, the most famous clown in the world, will make positively his last appearance before, at the age of seventy-four, retiring for ever to his villa in the South of France.

Dr. Adrian Wettsch was the son of a Swiss watchmaker and he started his career by clowning in a village square near Berne. His first paid performance was as a juvenile contortionist or “snake man” sixty-one years ago, and since then 30 million people have paid to see him perform all over the world.

He made two fortunes from clowning. The first he lost in the Wall Street crash and the second is a factory in Switzerland for making sound-recording equipment, and from the Circus Grock which bears a revolving stage and is one of the few left in Europe, and perhaps the only one which

refuses to show performing animals.

Unfair to Olympia

GERMANY has always been Grock's spiritual home and the Old Scala in Berlin his favourite theatre. During the war he went frequently from Switzerland to Germany to give performances for the Wehrmacht, and as a result the French refused to allow his circus to perform in France after 1945.

He thought himself unappreciated in England, and in his autobiography he writes that “Britain is the only country in the world where I don't have a single friend.”

He would only have to come staggering into the ring at Olympia carrying the huge leather trunk, empty save for a minute violin, and get tangled once more in the impossible chaos in front of his piano to learn differently.

Mighty Atom

THE appointment of Sir Frank Roberts as Ambassador to Jugoslavia was delayed to that he could act as Sir Anthony Eden's Lieutenant during the London Conference, but I understand he will leave for Belgrade next month.

Sir Frank, now forty-seven, is the pocket Hercules of the Foreign Office. He was a famous scrum-half and wicket-keeper for Rugby and Cricket, and might have won a Double Blue if he had been an inch or two taller. He is also a scratch golfer.

In 1944 he played in the classic cricket match in Moscow between the Embassy and the Military Mission. This took place on a football ground through which ran a railway-track, and it was frequently interrupted to allow the passage of slightly bewildered Russian peasants going about their business.

Under the Moscow midday sun an impassive crowd of Russians watched the mad Englishman Roberts withstand the onslaught of a soldier, only stirring sluggishly when from time to time he hit a six into the middle of them.

The Merc.

THERE are many stories of how the great Maybach-Daimler racing car, created in 1900, and

now once again very much to the fore, is called the “Mercedes,” but I believe these to be the facts:

The car was designed by Wilhelm Maybach and constructed by Gottlieb Daimler. The project was possible only because a rich financier named Jellinek became interested and placed a firm order for the first thirty-six cars, and in his honour the car was christened after his daughter, Mercedes Jellinek.

The first car was delivered to Mr. Jellinek early in 1901, and, as the Semaphor de Nice was in March of that year, won against all comers.

By decree passed in 1903 the financier changed his name to Jellinek-Mercedes, and his son Guy, now lives within a mile of the road on which that first Mercedes prize was won.

Tout Passe—

A PART of the very fabric of France, the beautiful Chateau of Sully-sur-Loire, is within an ace of changing hands.

The Marquise de Beausset-Roquefort, the owner, became convinced and he was supported by a French dowager, that somewhere beneath the fifteenth-century moated castle lay a fabulous treasure of gold and precious stones. She hired a firm to undertake a search, but after large-scale excavations and demolitions nothing was discovered, and on the 15th of August 1947 she sold for some ten million francs Madame de Beausset was unable or unwilling to meet it.

As the result the Chateau was put up for auction a few weeks ago and when Charles Trenet, the singer, had gone to over nineteen million francs, it was knocked down to the Maire de Paris, representing the commune, for twenty million (£20,000).

But then came reprieve. A bid of £10 million, two million was received within six days of the auction, and Madame de Beausset successfully applied for a re-auction which is now pending.

Term Time

A FAMOUS ichthyologist was criticised for not knowing the names of his students.

“I wouldn't think of remembering them,” he said. “For every student I remember, I have to forget the name of a fish.”